AMENDMENTS TO THE CLAIMS:

This listing of claims will replace all prior versions, and listings, of claims in the application:

Listing of Claims:

1. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus comprising:

a steering shaft constructed to have a steering wheel mounted at a rear end portion thereof;

a cylindrical steering column having said steering shaft rotatably supported therein;

vehicle body-side brackets used to clamp and fix said steering column;

a distance unit formed as an expanded portion of said steering column by plastic working and disposed between said body-side brackets with said steering shaft passing therethrough; and

position adjusting means for making the position of said steering column with respect to said body-side brackets adjustable within a predetermined adjustment range,

wherein said position adjusting means includes an adjusting bolt passing through said body-side brackets and through said distance unit of said steering column, and cooperable with a threaded member so as to releasably clamp said distance unit between said body-side brackets, and

said adjusting bolt is positioned, within said distance unit of said steering column, between said steering shaft and an upper wall of said steering column.

2. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said steering column is adjustable in a tilting direction with respect to said body-side brackets, and lower ends of said body-side brackets are positioned higher than a lower surface of a portion of said steering column disposed between said brackets in a most tilted-up position of said steering column.

3. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein an electric assist mechanism for assisting a steering power of said steering wheel is secured to a front end of said steering column.

4. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said plastic working is performed by hydroforming.

5. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein an electric assist mechanism for assisting a steering power of said steering wheel is secured to a front end of said steering column.

6. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 2, wherein said plastic working is performed by hydroforming.

7. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus comprising:

a steering shaft constructed to have a steering wheel mounted at a rear end portion thereof;

a cylindrical steering column having said steering shaft rotatably supported therein;

a vehicle body-side bracket arrangement having a portion fixed to a vehicle body-side strength member positioned above the steering column and having a pair of vertically extending side plates disposed to clamp and fix said steering column therebetween;

a distance unit formed as an expanded portion of said steering column by plastic working and disposed between said side plates with said steering shaft passing therethrough; and

position adjusting means for adjusting the position of said steering column relative to said side plates, within a predetermined adjustment range,

wherein said position adjusting means includes an adjusting bolt passing through said side plates and through said distance unit of said steering column, and a fastening mechanism cooperable with said adjusting bolt to releasably clamp said distance unit between said side plates, and

said adjusting bolt is positioned, within said distance unit of said steering column, between said steering shaft and an upper wall of said steering column.

8. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein said steering column is adjustable in a tilting direction with respect to said side plates, and lower ends of said side plates are positioned higher than a lower surface of a portion of said steering column disposed between said brackets in a most tilted-up position of said steering column.

9. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein an electric assist mechanism for assisting a steering power of said steering wheel is secured to a front end of said steering column.

10. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein said plastic working is performed by hydroforming.

11. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein an electric assist mechanism for assisting a steering power of said steering wheel is secured to a front end of said steering column.

12. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 8, wherein said plastic working is performed by hydroforming.

13. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus comprising:

a steering shaft constructed to have a steering wheel mounted at a rear end portion thereof;

a cylindrical steering column having said steering shaft rotatably supported therein, said steering column being formed with an expanded portion by plastic working with said steering shaft passing therethrough; and

a pair of support bracket side plates, each extending from a support bracket portion which is secured to a vehicle body-side strength member positioned above the steering column, said side plates being disposed to clamp and fix said expanded portion of said steering column therebetween; and

a position adjusting mechanism operable to adjust the position of said steering column relative to said side plates,

wherein said position adjusting mechanism includes an adjusting bolt passing through said side plates and through said expanded portion of said steering column, and a fastening mechanism cooperable with said adjusting bolt to releasably clamp said expanded portion of said steering column between said side plates, and

said adjusting bolt is positioned, within said expanded portion of said steering column, between said steering shaft and an upper wall of said steering column.

14. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 13, wherein said steering column is adjustable in a tilting direction with respect to said side plates, and lower ends of said side plates do not protrude downwardly relative to a lower surface of a lengthwise portion of said steering column disposed between said side plates in a most tilted-up position of said steering column.

15. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 13, wherein an electric assist mechanism for assisting a steering power of said steering wheel is secured to a front end of said steering column.

16. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 13, wherein said plastic working is performed by hydroforming.

17. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 14, wherein an electric assist mechanism for assisting a steering power of said steering wheel is secured to a front end of said steering column.

18. (Previously Presented) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 14, wherein said plastic working is performed by hydroforming.

19. (New) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 1, wherein said adjusting bolt is positioned closer to said steering shaft than to said upper wall of said steering column.

20. (New) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 19, wherein a distance between said adjusting bolt and said steering shaft is of the order of 1mm.

21. (New) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 7, wherein said adjusting bolt is positioned closer to said steering shaft than to said upper wall of said steering column.

22. (New) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 21, wherein a distance between said adjusting bolt and said steering shaft is of the order of 1mm.

23. (New) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 13, wherein said adjusting bolt is positioned closer

to said steering shaft than to said upper wall of said steering column.

24. (New) A steering column apparatus according to Claim 23, wherein a distance between said adjusting bolt and said steering shaft is of the order of 1mm.